

# Andronicus and Junia

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me" (Rom. 16:7 - NKJV)
  1. "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me" (Rom. 16:7 - ESV).
- B. Who were they?
  1. Andronicus means "Man of victory"
    - a. He eventually settled in the Roman province of Pannonia (modern day Hungary)
  2. Junias was very likely his wife, but could have been a sister or daughter
    - a. Junia was a popular name for Latin nobility. It was commonplace during this period for Greek-speaking Jewish families to give their daughters Latin names and their sons Greek names, hence the Greek name of Andronicus.
  3. They were very likely Hellenistic Jews who lived in Palestine and fled the persecution of Saul of Tarsus, eventually journeying to Rome, and joining with the Jewish colony there.
    - a. It is believed that the church at Rome was begun by Hellenistic Jews who were mostly freed slaves. (Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, The Morris Loeb Series; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960, 92).
- C. Paul calls them his kinfolk - "suggeneis - a relative, a fellow countryman, a cousin" (Strong's). Paul has a tendency to call all Jews his kinsmen
  1. It may mean fellow tribesmen (Benjamites)
  2. It may mean fellow-workers
  3. It is not likely that these were literal blood relatives.
    - a. It is improbable for Paul to have six actual kinsmen in Rome at the same time (Rom. 6:7, 11, 21, F. F. Bruce)
  4. Because all that they had in common was of greatest importance, Paul considered them true relatives.
    - a. Often what we share together in common as Christians brings us into a closer bond than that of family
- D. Paul calls them his fellow prisoners - "co-captives"
  1. They might have shared some prison time together. There is no record of this, but Paul was imprisoned on several occasions - 2Cor. 11:23
  2. It may be prisoner in the sense that they are not necessarily captives for Christ, but captured by Christ
- E. Paul said they were well known to the apostles
  1. We hold apostles in high esteem. What kind of people do apostles admire and honor?

- F. Paul declared that they were Christians before he was. That would mean they were among the earliest of believers. Their conversion would have had to have taken place within the first two years of the church
- G. These are just a few of the people who made up the church at Rome.
  - 1. Rom. 16:1-16, 21-23 is a verbal picture of a congregation.
  - 2. It reveals characteristics of a healthy congregation filled with spiritually minded people in the midst of a pagan stronghold of secular power

## **I. THE CHURCH AT ROME WAS MADE UP OF ORDINARY, DIVERSE PEOPLE WHO WERE IN THE LORD**

- A. The majority of the names in Romans 16 were Gentiles and either slaves or freed slaves.
  - 1. Some in the list may have been part of Caesar's household - Phil. 4:22
    - a. Aristobulus (16:10) was a grandson of Herod the Great and was a close friend of the Emperor Claudius. He was not a believer. When he died, his slaves would have become the property of the emperor, but would still be called "the household of Aristobulus."
    - b. The household of Narcissus (16:11) referred to the slaves belonging to a wealthy, wicked freedman who was also a friend of Emperor Claudius. When Nero came to the throne, his mother Agrippina forced Narcissus to commit suicide (three or four years before Romans was written), so his slaves also would be part of the royal household.
- B. The church in Rome was made up of these ordinary, diverse men and women. Some were slaves, others were blue collar workers, and others were wealthy.
  - 1. What drew them together and united them?
  - 2. The answer is in a phrase Paul repeats 11 times in these verses: "in the Lord" or "in Christ."
  - 3. Being "in Christ" is the most important description of anyone.
  - 4. Paul begins Romans 8 by stating (8:1), "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
  - 5. He ends that chapter by saying (8:39) that there is nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## **II. THE CHURCH AT ROME WAS MADE UP OF PEOPLE GROWING THROUGH SOUND DOCTRINE**

- A. Even though Romans is the most doctrinally complex letter in the New Testament, it was written to common people, many of them slaves, to teach them of Christ and to grow in the faith.
  - 1. It was not written to professional theologians.
  - 2. Doctrine is dismissed today as divisive or tedious and unnecessary
  - 3. Doctrine is the source of faith and the foundation of fellowship
  - 4. Acts 2:42; Rom. 6:17; 2John 9

### **III. THE CHURCH AT ROME WAS MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO WERE GROWING CLOSER IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONE ANOTHER**

- A. There are over 30 names in these two sections and Paul knew most of them personally. He mentions four of them as being especially close (“my beloved” or “the beloved”; 16:5, 8, 9, 12)
  - 1. We are not called to be Christians in isolation, but rather in relationships with one another.
  - 2. Paul was hurt often by others (2Tim. 1:15; 4:10, 14), but that didn’t keep him from pursuing warm relationships with other believers.

### **IV. THE CHURCH AT ROME WAS MADE UP OF PEOPLE WHO WERE FAMILY AND WERE HOSPITABLE AND HELPFUL TOWARD ONE ANOTHER**

- A. Paul urges the church to extend hospitality to Phoebe, “our sister.”
  - 1. Quartus was “the brother.”
  - 2. Priscilla and Aquila opened their home to host the church at Rome and in Ephesus (16:5)
  - 3. Gaius hosted a church in his house at Corinth (16:23).
- B. They were family and acted like family

### **V. THE CHURCH AT ROME WAS MADE UP OF A UNITED PEOPLE WHO WORKED HARD**

- A. Paul repeatedly mentions how these people were involved in serving the Lord.
  - 1. Phoebe was “a servant of the church in Cenchrea,” (16:1).
  - 2. Paul also mentions Mary, “who has worked hard for you” (16:6).
  - 3. He calls Urbanus “our fellow worker in Christ” (16:9).
  - 4. Tryphaena and Tryphosa (likely sisters, whose names mean Delicate and Dainty) were not fragile; they were “workers in the Lord” (16:12)
  - 5. Persis (another woman) “has worked hard in the Lord” (16:12).
  - 6. And he calls Timothy “my fellow worker” (16:21).
- B. God’s people succeed when they work together peacefully
  - 1. Psalm 133:1; Neh. 3

### **VI. THE CHURCH AT ROME WAS MADE UP OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED THE LORD**

- A. Even though the faith gives men the responsibility of leadership in the church, it is significant to note that six of the nine people Paul praises as hard workers are women (16:1-23)
  - 1. Of the 30 people greeted in this chapter, nine of them are women.
  - 2. Obviously Paul believed that women have an important role to play in serving the Lord.
  - 3. This does not circumvent or void New Testament teaching; it emphasizes the value of what every Christian brings to the table, rich or poor, old or young, black or white, male or female

## **VII. THE CHURCH AT ROME WAS MADE UP OF WHOLE FAMILIES THAT OBEYED THE GOSPEL**

- A. Paul speaks of two households (16:10, 11), which referred to both the biological family members and the servants, plus Rufus' mother and Nereus' sister (16:13, 15).
- B. In the Book of Acts, whole households came to the faith
  - 1. Acts 2:39 - "you and your children"
  - 2. Acts 10:1-48 - Cornelius
  - 3. Acts 16:15 - Lydia
  - 4. Acts 16:31-34 - the Philippian jailer
- C. God has always willed that families serve Him together - Gen. 18:19; Eph. 6:4
  - 1. Even though sometimes families go in different directions - Matt. 10:37

### Conclusion:

- A. None of the people in Romans 16 were famous or powerful by the world's standards. None of them knew that their names would be enshrined in Scripture for millions of Christians down through the ages to read.
- B. Even though our names will never be in Scripture and unlikely to be recognized or remembered by the world, God knows our names and we are important to Him.
- C. "It is a great thing to go down to history as the man with the open house or as the man with the brotherly heart. Someday people will sum us up in one sentence. What will that sentence be?" (William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, Westminster, rev. ed., p. 220)
- D. How would Paul have described you if you were in this list? How would you like to be described? You can change that today.